

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

mortal sin, and the necessity of Holy Church which God manifested in His breast; and how no one can attain to taste the beauty of God in the abyss of the Trinity, save by the means of this sweet Spouse, because we must all pass through the gate of Christ crucified, and this gate is not found elsewhere than in Holy Church. I saw that this Spouse offered life, for she holds life in herself in such wise that there is no one who can slay her, and that she gave strength and light, for there is no one who can weaken her nor give her darkness, as far as concerns her very self. And I saw that her fruit never fails, but ever increases.

" Then said God eternal: ° All this dignity, which thy understanding could not comprehend, is given to man by My goodness. Look with grief and bitter sorrow, and thou shalt see that none go to this Spouse save for her external raiment, that is, for her temporal substance. But thou seest her destitute of those who take or seek what is within this Spouse, to wit, the fruit of the blood. Whoso does not bring the price of charity with true humility, and with the light of the most holy faith, shall not partake of this fruit to life, but to death ; he would act like the thief, who takes what is not his ; for the fruit of the blood belongs to those who bring the price of love, because she is founded in love and is love itself. And for love I would have every man give to her, according as I, God eternal, give to My servants to administer in diverse ways, even as they have received. But I am grieved that I find no one to minister to her. Nay, it seems that every one has abandoned her. But I will find the remedy.'

" The sorrow and the fire of desire waxing stronger, I cried out in the sight of God, saying : ° What can I do, O inestimable Fire ?' And His benignity replied : ' Thou canst offer up thy life anew, and never give thyself rest. To this exercise have I set and am setting thee, thee and all those who follow and shall follow thee. Take heed, then, never to slacken, but ever to increase your desires ; for I, with affection of love, shall surely succour you with My grace for soul and for body. And, in order that your minds may not be occupied in other things, I have made provision by giving an impulse to her whom I have set to